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SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF NON-STANDARD DIALECTS.

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THIS PAPER WAS SUBMITTED TO THE BUREAU OF CURRICULUM RESEARCH OF THE NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THEIR USE IN PREPARING A MANUAL FOR LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS IN GRADES 5 TO 12. THE SUGGESTIONS HERE GREW OUT OF THE AUTHORS' ATTEMPTS "TO ISOLATE THE STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE VERNACULAR USED IN URBAN GHETTOS AND THE STANDARD ENGLISH OF THE CLASSROOM." THE STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS ARE DISCUSSED IN THIS PAPER SINCE THEY ARE MOST IMMEDIATELY ACCESSIBLE TO LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS. BRIEFLY, THE SUGGESTIONS ARE DESIGNED TO PRESENT INFORMATION ON THE PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR OF NONSTANDARD AND NEGRO DIALECTS IN A FORM USEFUL TO THE ENGLISH TEACHER. THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM AREAS ARE OUTLINED AND PRESENTED IN TERMS OF THE GENERAL RULES DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN STANDARD AND NONSTANDARD FORMS. SOME OF GRAMMATICAL POINTS DISCUSSED ARE--(1) VERB TENSES, (2) FORMS OF THE NOUN, (3) NEGATION PATTERNS, (4) PRONOUNS, (5) EMBEDDED QUESTIONS, AND (6) COUNT AND MASS NOUNS. ARTICULATION AND PRONUNCIATION PATTERNS IN NONSTANDARD SPEECH ARE ALSO DISCUSSED AND THE AUTHORS PRESENT CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING MATERIALS TO TEACH CONTRASTIVE PATTERNS. THE LINGUISTIC TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT IS UNDERSTANDABLE BY THE NONSPECIALIST. (JD)

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Some Suggestions for Teaching Standard English to Speakers of Non-Standard Urban Dialects

Originally submitted to the Bureau of Curriculum Research of the Board of Education of the City of New York

for Chapter V: Oral Language for Speakers of Non-Standard English

English Language Arts Curriculum Revision Project, Grades 5 - 12; Strand Four: Developing Oral-Aural Skills

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For the past several years, we have been engaged in a study of the language of Negro and Puerto Rican speakers in urban ghettos of Northern cities with our principal focus on Central Harlem. Our study is one of a number of research projects, supported by the U.S. Office of Education and known collectively as Project Literacy, which aim to clarify the basic processes involved in learning to read. Our own aim is to isolate the structural and functional conflicts between the vernacular used in urban ghettos and the standard English of the classroom. By functional conflict, we mean the problems that follow from the different uses of language and attitudes towards language that are characteristic of these two forms of English. Under structural conflict, we include the problems raised by differences in the grammatical systems and sound patterns involved. Although the functional conflicts may be more important in the long run, it is the structural conflicts which are most immediately accessible to linguistic analysis, and our publications so far have dealt chiefly with this problem.[1]

In January of this year, we conferred with the Bureau of Curriculum Research of the New York City Board of Education, as they were developing their revised manual for Language Arts. Many of our findings were relevant to the problems they were considering in the teaching of classroom language skills in Grades 5 - 12. We subsequently submitted a set of suggestions for their use in developing this manual. These suggestions are designed to present briefly the information on the vernacular in the form most useful to the English teacher. Rather than a miscellaneous list of errors, or a comprehensive grammar which attempts to outline the entire language, we tried to describe the most important features in terms of the most general rule that differentiates the two forms of language. Although this material is preliminary, and incomplete, we feel that it will be of interest to others working on the same problems.

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[1] Labov, William, Paul Cohen and Clarence Robins. A Preliminary Study of the Structure of English Used by Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City. Cooperative Research Project #3091, U.S. Office of Education, 1965.

Labov, William. "Some Sources of Reading Problems for Negro Speakers of Non-Standard English." In New Directions in Elementary English (Alexander Frazier, Ed.). Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967.

Some non-standard forms are special cases that affect only one or two words of the language; but many are instances of general rules that operate in the non-standard vernacular in a regular way and can affect the form of every sentence. It is plain that the more general rules should be introduced first in a teaching program, no matter how prominent and striking the isolated items may be. For example, the use of less'n in He won't come less'n I call him is a Southernism that is quite unacceptable in the standard English of New York City, but the problem appears only when the particular word unless is to be used. In a sentence like He go downtown, on the other hand, the particular verb go is irrelevant: the student must be taught the regular rule for the third-person singular -s for every regular verb in the language. The order of the material given below reflects this reasoning: within each section, the items are presented which involve the most general rules, and each item is presented under the form of the most general rules that applies, according to our present knowledge of the language.

The non-standard dialect forms shown here are most characteristic of the Negro children living in areas where large numbers of migrants have recently arrived from the Southern United States. New York City has received Southern speakers chiefly from the Atlantic Coastal states. In other Northern and Western cities, such as Chicago or Los Angeles, most migrants have come from different regions of the South, but the

resulting dialect patterns in the urban centers have been surprisingly similar; the obvious differences are due to the Northern base rather than the Southern influence.

Some of the non-standard features discussed are used by groups outside the Negro communities discussed above. These more general non-standard forms are marked with an asterisk, *.

GRAMMATICAL PATTERNS

Forms of the Verb.

1. The -s of the Present Tense. It has been widely noticed that many non-standard speakers from the community discussed here make an extraordinary number of mistakes in person-number agreement--a much higher number than in the community at large. Attempts to correct these forms one at a time are almost certain to fail. Most of the children concerned have no regular rule for adding -s to the verb when the subject is 3rd-person singular. Their normal vernacular forms in casual, every-day speech are

I know, you know, he know, she know, it know,
we know, you know, they know
I do, you do, he do, she do, it do, the man do,
we do, you do, they do

The regular forms of the simple present should be taught from the outset, without assuming that any child necessarily possesses even a passive knowledge of the standard rules.

Sometimes, the -s does appear with the 3rd person singular, or with other persons, but this simply reflects the fact that children have learned that -s is used in school language. Their partial learning does not extend to the regular rule for placing this -s, and as a result it may appear in almost any position:

I sees it
They runs down the street
Somebody get hurts
He can goes out

2. The -ed of the Past Tense. In the non-standard speech considered here, there is some basis for the -ed of the past and perfect tenses of the regular verb, but in the great majority of cases this inflection is not pronounced.

He walk' home yesterday.
I have live' here.

The -ed is pronounced more often after verbs ending in -t or -d (started or added) or before a vowel (walked along), because part of the difficulty with -ed has to do with rules of pronunciation in which consonant clusters are simplified (see below). But even when children pronounce this -ed, it may not act as a signal of the past tense for them. A good diagnostic sentence is:

When I passed by, I read the sign.

Children who pronounce the -ed in passed, but say read to rhyme with need, are clearly not interpreting the written signal, and do not have the rule of the standard dialect for the past tense. Similarly, we

can infer that children who read aloud "He pickted on me", do not know the regular rules for the forms of the -ed ending.[1]

All of the children concerned use the past tense for many common irregular verbs such as give-gave and run-ran, and the problem is chiefly with the forms of the regular verb. On the other hand non-standard speech does allow a freer use of the historical present in narrative than is permitted in colloquial informal speech. Thus we find

I walk home last night.
He stay home yesterday.

Children therefore need training in the use of the -ed ending as a signal of the past tense, and in the consistent use of the past tense in formal narratives.

3. The Verb to be. There are many differences between standard and non-standard rules in the use of the verb to be. Most commonly, the finite forms do not appear in the present, whether they are copulas or auxiliaries, and students need to be taught from the beginning that standard English does not permit this.

He here now.
But everybody not black.
You out the game.
She lookin' good.

On the other hand, we find the non-finite be inserted in the same slot, primarily in contexts of generality or repeated action and particularly in the present tense:

Most of the time he be in the library.
He be doin' that all the time.
So it all don't be on her; it be half on me and half on her.
They always be messin' around.

This use of be is very persistent, more so than most of the other plainly marked Southernisms, and it may be difficult to show directly why it is incorrect. Standard English does allow be in many similar situations, and one would need a very good knowledge of English grammar to understand why be is not allowed in They be here but is perfectly standard in

Be here.
They might be here.
I demand that they be here.

The best approach to the be situation is probably indirect. The students must be taught the finite forms of to be in the present very thoroughly, especially in contexts of generality and repeated action, where otherwise the bare infinitive be would occur.

4. The future. In many cases, the general use of be is difficult to distinguish from the standard future. Because -l is usually vocalized (see below), there may be little difference between

She be comin' home and
She'll be comin' home.

For this reason, it is best to use the uncontracted forms of the future in standard English, and give students practice in using these in place of the colloquial futures

I'm a hit you.
He goin' [= gone] hit you.
He hit you tomorrow.

*5. Irregular preterit and perfect forms. Though children who speak this form of non-standard English do use many irregular

forms correctly, a large number of irregular Southern preterits and perfects are encountered. It is necessary to teach the standard forms of such common verbs as begin, break, come, do, drink, drown, give, go, know, lie, ring, run, see, sing, sit, sneak, take, throw, and write.

*6. The passive. The colloquial passive with got is normally the only one used in the non-standard vernacular, as in He got stung, and children need practice in the standard form.

7. Perfective done. A highly marked Southernism is the use of done to emphasize the completed or accomplished state of an action:

The bullet done penetrate my body.

This is not a common form in Northern cities, but when it does occur, it poses difficulties since there is no simple literal equivalent in standard English. It is best treated as an unacceptable Southernism similar to less'n or tote, though it is plainly more important than these in the original non-standard grammar.

Forms of the Noun

8. The plural -s. The plural inflection is almost intact in non-standard speech dealt with here. This -s behaves in quite the opposite manner from the third-singular -s or the possessive -s: it is used regularly by most young children, and where it differs from standard English it is even more general: it is extended to form a double plural in mens, womens, childrens,

peoples, teeths. When the -s is missing, it is most frequently in fixed contexts like eight year old, ten cent. In short, the standard rule is known, and the teacher's task is chiefly to correct a few irregularities.

9. The possessive -s. The possessive -s which is added to nouns in standard English has no representation whatsoever in the non-standard grammar discussed here. The normal form of the possessive is

John old lady house.
That's Nick boy.
His father sister husband.

The standard rule must be taught without any assumption that it is necessarily part of the speech of any of the children, as in the case is the third-singular -s of the verb. The only place where it does occur regularly is with possessive pronouns:

It's mines.
That's hers.

The use of mines must be corrected to mine as an individual item.[2,3]

10. Pronoun forms. There are several highly marked irregularities of pronoun forms to be considered, especially among possessive pronouns. The principal non-standard form is they for their, as in They brought it on they own selves. You is sometimes not distinct from your, and both of these are partly the result of rules of pronunciation (the loss of final -r). We also find an even more deviant form with the pluralizer

them substituting for his or their:

His eyes are--All of them eyes are orange.
or reddish.
They were in Larry and them hallway.

Because of these several irregularities, the possessive pronouns should be taught systematically.

Other word forms.

*11. Adverbs in -ly. The -ly inflection, turning adjectives into adverbs, is rarely used among non-standard speakers, and should be taught as a regular rule from the outset. At the same time, the use of the irregular adverbs such as well must be taught.

*12. Comparatives in -er. There are many difficulties with the comparative, but the simplest is in the choice of more or -er. The use of both is common: He is more taller than me; He is pure blacker than you; students need practice in using one or the other.[4]

Sentence patterns.

There are a very large number of syntactic problems which could be discussed here: the most impartant are those which concern the basic transformations of the question, the negative, and the embedded question, but there are many equally general rules which occur less frequently.

13. Do-support in questions. In the rules of the

non-standard vernacular, the normal form of the question transformation is usually found: the childish How he can fix that? is largely replaced by the standard How can he fix that? by the 5th or 6th grade. But with the simple verb, we get forms such as

How he fix that?
How it taste?
Why they listen to me?

There is some reason to think that these are derived from the standard forms by deletion of do. In any case, the use of overt do-support must be taught, to relate He fixes that to Does he fix that?

14. Negative patterns. In the most general kind of non-standard English, ain't is simply the particular equivalent of be plus negative. But in the non-standard English considered here, ain't stands for the negative element alone. Since do support is largely missing, we find

He ain't start it.	for	He didn't start it.
*He ain't started to go.	for	He hasn't started to go.
He ain't finish.	for	He isn't finished.

In the past tense, we have wasn't or weren't, though without any regular person-number agreement. In negative questions, the ain't element is regularly brought to the front of the sentence, so that do-support is not needed

*Ain't that a shame?

The same pattern is extended in declarative statements with

strong affect to yield:

Ain't nobody see it; ain't nobody hear it

parallel to literary forms, Nor has anyone seen it; scarcely has anyone seen it. As a result of these many differences in negative patterns it is necessary to introduce the standard rules in a systematic way from the very beginning.

*15. Negatives with indefinites: the "double negative".

It is difficult for many teachers to correct the non-standard "double negative" beaause the rules for the standard form are not taught systematically. Briefly, in standard English there is a general rule which states that a negative element in a sentence is attracted to the first indefinite in the sentence; these negatives also include scarcely, hardly, never, rarely, which are brought to the very beginning of the sentence. So instead of Anybody can't do that, we have standard Nobody can do that. Instead of Anyone hardly knows that we have standard Hardly does anyone know that. A sentence like:

No one will do anything to anybody

has a corresponding passive:

Nothing will be done to anybody by anyone.

The general non-standard rule is much simpler: it says that a negative is attracted to every indefinite in the sentence. So a single negative element, instead of being represented by one negative form, is represented by many:

Nobody don't know.
Nobody won't do nothing to nobody.
I ain't never had no trouble with none of them.

The double negative will therefore occur only in sentences which originally contain indefinite pronouns or adverbs, and any practice in avoiding double negatives (perhaps better called "negative concord") must be with sentences containing such indefinites.

The particular non-standard forms used in the Negro communities of the North differ from the general non-standard form in one important way: the negative element can be transferred to the pre-verbal position in embedded clauses without producing a new negative meaning that contradicts the first. Thus the general non-standard form:

There ain't no cat can't get in no [pigeon] coop

is the opposite of

There ain't no cat can get in no coop.

But in the Negro community, we can have:

It ain't no cat can't get in no coop

meaning the same as

It ain't no cat can get in no coop.

With these basic rules in mind, the teacher should be able to construct forms for teaching the standard rules for negative attraction to any of the students concerned.

I6. The dummy it. One of the most characteristic forms of the non-standard speech being considered is the equivalent of There was, there is or there are. Instead of these forms, we

have It is...

It's a policeman at the door.
It was one in the hall this mornin'.
It ain't no cat can't get in no coop.

The contraction it's is normally pronounced with the t assimilated to the s, to rhyme with hiss. Occasionally this unstressed form is voiced to rhyme with his, and teachers will hear the form as equivalent to dropping the subject:

"Is" raining.
"Is" a policeman at the door.

However, if any element is dropped, it would usually be the copula:

It a policeman at the door.

Therefore, the teacher need not spend time teaching the student to replace dropped subjects, but rather to retain the copula, and replace non-standard it with standard there in the proper contexts.

17. Embedded questions. We frequently encounter sentences of the following form:

* Let me see could I think of some right away.
I don't know how old are he.
* I don't know how did I do it.
She could see is the boy nose bleed.

In these sentences, we find that the order of the original question is preserved, with auxiliary or question word first and subject second. It would seem that standard English re-reverses the question in the embedded or indirect form to

return to the original order of a simple declarative [or exclamation].

I don't know how old he is.
I don't know how I did do it.
Let me see if I could think of some right away.
She could see if the boy's nose is bleedin.

Notice that in many of these sentences a deleted if must reappear. The non-standard retention of the inverted order preserves the question meaning which is conveyed in the standard if. To teach the standard rules for this construction, it may not be enough to drill the student on word order: in addition, the teacher may want to show how the meaning of wondering or questioning is preserved in the how or the if which precedes the embedded sentence.

18. Pleonastic or "double" forms. The redundancy or doubling of forms seen in the negative concord is a characteristic of many deviant forms in this speech pattern considered here. The commonest such forms are demonstrative with locative adverbs:

This here one is a Davis.

We also have frequent combinations such as only but

I didn't play wit' only but Wayne and Tyrone.

The conjunction and plus is even more common:

And plus I bought me some spinach and rice.

Parallel to this is or either:

Or either they'll say...

It is characteristic of the Southern dialect pattern that quantitative adverbs are multiplied:

You play with them near about mostly every day
So he'll bring in almost close to two hundred a week.

Finally, we can note the redundancy of certain prepositions with relative adverbs:

...right around the corner where I used to live at.

In all of these examples, the non-standard forms show extra material which is not required or allowed in the standard dialect. In addition to drills on the patterns involved, the teacher should be able to show how the extra material contributes nothing to the meaning of the sentence.

19. Adverb placement. There are many subtle and difficult rules involved in the placement of adverbs such as almost, even, mostly, all over; these are principally quantifiers of the verbal action as a whole. We can see that non-standard speakers show many deviations from standard usage in placing these adverbs, even though we may not be able to state the exact rule affected in each case, nor find a single generalization to cover all the difficulties.

That's what mostly we call 'em.
...even a guy might pick up a garbage can.
Almost my life was lost.
The longest place I stayed was -uh- in North Carolina.
So, this is a crazy world we absolutely livin' in,
and everything contradicts its own self.
But he act all stupid.
He got dirt all on his knees.

20. Difficulties with the comparative. In addition to the simple problem of the form of the comparative adjective, we find a great many difficulties with complex comparative,

superlative and equative constructions:

I know he was the most award winner in track.
I'm about the only one that has the less. I think.
He can run the same fas' as I can.
So she got the same accent of her mother.
I had just as many friends up here than I had down there.
Everybody got the same equal amount.

Since this is one of the most complex areas of English grammar, it is not surprising that speakers run into difficulty. It is apparent that the high school teacher must gradually introduce students into the more complex constructions with sufficient practice to enable them to avoid such problems as those shown here.

*21. Relative pronouns. The general pronoun used in the non-standard dialect is which. It must be replaced with who in some obvious cases:

John, which is seven. Linda which is six...

But in other cases, which is used as a general connective which has no direct equivalent in standard English:

They were poor, which we áll was poor, but I mean...
I had some older brothers--you know, which these boys they were older than I am.
From there I move to 115 St., which I was livin' there for about two years.

In these cases, the best equivalent is a simple and: the speaker must be taught to give up the sense of vague anaphoric reference which he tries to register with which, but which standard English cannot provide unless it is tied to a particular noun phrase.

22. Count nouns vs. mass nouns. There are a great many non-standard uses of nouns to be considered which can not be corrected efficiently unless the teacher first introduces the notion of count nouns and mass nouns. Count nouns such as chair and table have plurals and take the indefinite article a. Mass nouns such as cash or police have no plural forms, do not occur with the indefinite article a, but do occur with no article or the indefinite some. Thus we have

Give me a chair. Give me some chairs.
Give me cash. Give me some cash.

but not

Give me chair. Give me some chair.
Give me a cash. Give me some cashes.

With such a distinction in mind, the teacher can show that the following sentences are unacceptable because the nouns are treated as count nouns rather than mass nouns:

Give us a tater chips.
Dat's a dope [that is, narcotics].
He's training to be a police.
I don't use those slangs.

ARTICULATION AND PRONUNCIATION

The most general principle involved in the articulation of the non-standard speech considered here is the same as that in standard English: less information is provided or less precision required for sounds at the ends of words than for sounds at the beginnings of words. For example, initial t is a forcefully articulated consonant, with a burst of air that affects the quality of the next sound; but final t need not be released at all, and in this case is recognized through its effect on the preceding sounds. Non-standard English carries this principle much further than standard English, in the simplification of final consonant clusters, the loss of final r, l and of other tongue-tip consonants: t, d, s, z, and to a lesser extent, n. In all these cases the teacher can benefit by observing one general rule: that a rule for the pronunciation of a consonant or vowel is usually sensitive to the sound immediately following the one concerned. Thus when a consonant cluster or single consonant is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, it is much more likely for the full form to be pronounced than when the next word begins with a consonant. The teacher can apply this rule in giving practice in pronunciation. (However, it does not always follow that the sound is easier for the student to hear in a phrase; the teacher's clearly released final -t in just may be heard more clearly than in just a minute).

1. Consonant cluster simplifications. English has a wide range of consonant clusters at the ends of words, but by far the most common are those in which the second element is t,d or s,z. These two pairs are related in the same way: t and s are voiceless consonants, and d and z are the corresponding voiced consonants-- that is, the vocal cords are vibrating as these consonants are formed.

We should also observe that the consonants t,d and s,z are also the major inflections of English. The first two are the signals of the past and perfect tenses, and the second two appear in many different grammatical forms: the third-person singular present form of the verb, the plural, the possessive, the adverbial -s in besides, and the contracted forms let's, it's, etc. When these final elements are grammatical inflections, the appearance of t or d, s or z, is predicted by the first consonant of the cluster:

after voiceless consonants	t	s
after voiced consonants	d	z

(If the first consonant is a t or a d, then in the past tense there is no cluster--the inflection is an unstressed vowel and d; if the first consonant is a sibilant--a hissing or hushing sound, then there is no cluster in the other cases-- the inflections occur as unstressed vowel plus z.)

Of course there are some consonant clusters which are merely parts of the basic word: as in fist, find, hold, belt, six [sɪks]. In this case, the final consonant cannot be predicted after some consonants.

In the non-standard English of the larger community there is a very high rate of simplification of such clusters such as fist or find. Even among educated speakers, words such as just are often simplified. But this process does not take place when the second element is a grammatical signal. Furthermore, the cluster is usually kept intact when the next word begins with a vowel. These facts show that we are dealing with a simple pronunciation factor which has no effect upon the grammar of the language.

However, in the non-standard English of the urban centers being considered here, the line between grammatical rules and rules of pronunciation is not so easy to draw. The clusters are frequently simplified--in many cases just as often when the second consonant is a grammatical signal.

In the case of -t and -d clusters as in act, walked, and grabbed, it is the second element which disappears. There is some tendency for the cluster to be pronounced more often when the cluster contains a grammatical element, but only a small tendency, and there is some tendency for the cluster to be pronounced when the next word begins with a vowel, but also only a small tendency. On the whole, we can say that there is a basis for the teacher to use in giving the child practice in the standard forms, and it may be especially helpful if the word is given in a phrase with the next word beginning with a vowel:

not - I walked home. but - I walked away.

In the case of clusters ending in -s, we find a wide variety of different results depending on the grammatical element involved. As noted above, the -s is simply missing in the basic vernacular for the 3rd-person singular form of the present verb and the possessive. But for the plural -s and the adverbial -s, the clusters are only occasionally simplified, and here too it will be helpful to give practice with phrases in which the next word begins with a vowel. In the case of it's, let's, that's, etc., there is rarely any influence of pronunciation on grammar, since it is almost always the first element which disappears, assimilated to the -s:

Le's go; i's hot; tha's right.

There are a few clusters ending in -k and -p which behave like simple words in -st: desk is des', ask can be as' as well as aks, and wasp is was'. Here again a following vowel will help bring out the missing consonant except in the case of certain words where a basic change in the underlying "dictionary" form has taken place. In words like tes', toas', ghos', the apostrophe is truly a fiction for many children, for their plurals are tesses, toases, ghoses, and the standard forms test, toast, ghost must be taught as brand new items.

2. Final and pre-consonantal -r. In the New York City community at large, the basic vernacular (along with many educated varieties) is "r-less". The consonant -r that appears

in spelling is never pronounced at the ends of words or before final consonants as in car and card, core and cored. Instead, the vowel is lengthened and may be followed by an unstressed center vowel. This feature is also characteristic of Southern speech, so that in the urban centers we find the same "r-less" pronunciation.

The pronunciation of this final and pre-consonantal r is rapidly being accepted as a standard of correct speech among younger educated people, and the community at large. However, r-less speech is certainly not "incorrect", and a great many teachers and educated speakers are completely r-less. At first sight, one would think that there is no reason to teach the pronunciation of -r to disadvantaged youth. Nevertheless, it may be good strategy to teach the pronunciation of the final -r, for many reasons. First, this variable is one of the most important marks of careful speech for younger people in New York City. Even though the older generation may still use prestige forms of r-less speech, the younger generation has turned to the general Northern pattern of r-pronunciation as the norm. This tendency is even stronger in the Negro community, which is becoming oriented more and more towards the Northern model of careful speech (although the Southern-based dialect forms are still the basis of affective or family speech). Second, and more importantly, the introduction of final -r will do a great deal of work in helping to teach standard grammar.

In the use of the auxiliary and copula verb *to be*, the 2nd-person singular and plural form *are* is strongly reinforced by *r*-pronunciation. In the past tense, person-number agreement depends upon the distinction of *was* and *were*, strongly supported by *r*-pronunciation. The possessive adjectives *your* and *their* are distinguished much more easily from *you* and *they* when final *r* is proncunced. In *r*-less dialects, all these differences depend upon subtle differences of vowel height and obscure glides which are easily lost.

Finally, the pronunciation of final *r* may be very helpful in teaching students the full forms of words which have been altered in their underlying system. The *r*-less speakers of the larger community rarely drop *r* when a vowel follows, as in *four o'clock* or *Paris*, and as a result the standard spelling forms of the words are easy for them to grasp. (There is an *r* in *four* because it is produced in *four o'clock*.) But speakers of the Southern-influenced dialect are *r*-less in a stronger sense: for many of them, there may not be enough support for inferring the existence of an *r* in *four* (or *car*, *beer*, *Paris*, or *Carol*) because the following vowel does not bring out the *r* with the necessary regularity or reliability, and many words may then be persistently misspelled without the *r* in school.

For all these reasons, it may be advisable for teachers in New York City schools to introduce the use of final *-r* in the most formal styles, in pronouncing words aloud, and to have children practice the pronunciation of final *-r*, even

though this is not a vitally important feature in itself.

3. Final -l. The situation with final and pre-consonantal l in pal, help, etc., is parallel in many ways to final and pre-consonantal r. However, there is one important difference: there is no standard dialect in which it is acceptable to omit final -l. Homonyms such as too and tool, go and goal are not recognized in standard English, though there are speakers in the larger community who show such a pattern.

The Southern-influenced non-standard dialect shows a much greater loss of -l than in the community as a whole. Normally, -l is replaced by a back unrounded glide, which is often difficult to hear, and after back rounded vowels u and o, it tends to disappear entirely. Again, we find serious grammatical consequences of this fact, since She be goin' and She'll be goin' can be very difficult to distinguish.

Practice in the pronunciation of final -l will be easier for the student if the training exercises have l followed by a vowel, as in a pal of mine.

4. The pronunciation of th. Initial th in thing and then shows roughly the same pattern in this non-standard dialect as for most non-standard speakers. A weakly articulated t-like sound is used in thing and a similar d-like sound in then. Occasionally a strongly articulated t or d is heard, and then the word thin becomes homonymous with tin or (more commonly), then with den. The voiceless th in thin is more

frequently an affricate--that is, an intermediate sound that begins like a t and ends like a th.

In the middle of words, and more importantly at the end of words, speakers of this non-standard dialect frequently use -f and -v in place of the corresponding th sounds: Ruth is not distinguished from roof, and bathe rhymes with rave. This shift is not characteristic of any non-standard dialect of the adult community at large, though children do show f and v for th sounds and Cockney English is noted for this feature. The great difficulty for the teacher and student alike is that the difference between English f and th is extremely hard to hear as a rule. Unless the consonants are carefully pronounced, and hearing conditions are ideal, even trained groups of phoneticians will not be able to transcribe these sounds reliably. Therefore the teacher will have to determine, by careful testing and visual observation of the student's lips, whether or not (a) he normally produces final th in careful speech, and (b) whether or not he can hear the difference when the sounds are very carefully pronounced. It is interesting to note that hypercorrection is rarely found: f is used where standard English has th, but not the reverse--roof is not pronounced as Ruth. The same observation holds for initial position: we almost never find a case of den pronounced as then. The fact that the confusion is in one direction only, differentiates this consonantal situation from the typical vowel situation, where fluctuation back and forth is much more common.

6. The loss of other final consonants. The losses of final consonants discussed above are the most regular cases, but we also note the absence of individual final consonants such as -t, -d, -s, and less commonly -n, -k, -g and -p. As an example, one illiterate teen-ager from South Carolina can best be quoted as saying:

I ma' a ba' spee' for I make a bad speech.

Though final -d is often lost entirely, it is even more commonly pronounced as a lenis -t, so that rabbit and rabid can not be distinguished, and David rhymes with save it. Final -n is frequently heard as nasalization of the preceding vowel, and it rarely disappears in any absolute sense.

In one way, these erratic losses are more important for the teacher than the regular processes discussed before. A few children have a great deal of difficulty in understanding and being understood because they have the most extreme forms of the rules for final simplification, and most of their syllables actually end with vowels. In their speech, there is so much unexpected homonymy that intelligibility suffers badly. Teachers who notice such cases can recognize them as exceptional, and make sure that they obtain special correction.

7. Some problems with initial clusters. Though the most serious difficulties are found at the ends of words, there are a number of Southern-influenced characteristics of initial consonant clusters. Initial str-, for example, is occasionally heard as skr- so that stream is said as scream, street as

skreet. Initial shr- is variously sw-, sr-, shw-: shrimp is the word most characteristically affected. There are various combinations in which -r- is lost, chiefly after th- (and often after b, p, k and g), and where a back rounded vowel follows: the Southern forms th'ow, th'ough are very common.

VOWELS

When dealing with vowels, it is more important to bear in mind the relations between the sounds, and the distinctions that can be made, than the actual sounds themselves. Many descriptions of non-standard dialects draw attention to the "substitution of sounds", such as the use of i for e in pen and friend. While such statements do refer to real examples, teachers who try to follow them will be puzzled to note that the same speakers will sometimes "substitute e for i" in pin and wind. In this situation we are actually dealing with a single underlying fact: that many speakers of this non-standard dialect do not distinguish i and e before any nasal consonant, and therefore either e or i may appear without making any significant difference for them. A teacher who thinks in terms of such contrasts--trying to see what is "same" and "different" for these students--will be dealing with the entire problem directly, while a teacher who tries to correct each "mistake" as it occurs will be faced with an unending task and frustrated students. In each case, the teacher should be on the alert for the existence of sets of homonyms among the students

which differ from her own and from those of standard English. The facts for any given case can be determined by giving a simple perception test, such as that shown on the attached page. Then the teacher can give a number of ear-training exercises (using essentially the same procedure as in the perception test) to teach the students to hear the distinction. Training in the actual production of the standard distinction comes last, and will be greatly facilitated if the students have already learned to hear and recognize the differences in the speech of others. With these preliminary remarks, we can proceed to describe the various vowel problems quite briefly.

8. The merger of fear and fair. In the speech of many non-standard speakers, all of the words which rhyme with fear also rhyme with fair and the class of words that rhyme with fair in standard English. Thus steer and stair, cheer and chair, mere and mare, hear and hair are homonyms, usually pronounced with a sound close to that of the second element in standard English. In the South, this merger is most characteristic of Coastal South Carolina, and speakers from this area are most apt to show it. A similar situation is not unknown in the non-standard English of the New York City speech community in general, where many younger speakers merge fear and fair in their r-less dialect--in this case, with a sound closer to that of fear in standard English.

9. The merger of moor and more. Words which rhyme with moor in standard English are not distinguished from words which

rhyme with more: thus moor and more, lure and lore, tour and tore are homonyms. Again, this merger is common in the community at large, with a sound closer to that of moor, while the Southern-influenced form is closer to that of standard more. This general situation should not be confused with the pronunciation of particular words such as sure, poor, and your, which in many dialects are pronounced with the vowel of more, even when the moor-more distinction is made in other words.

In the South, we find another non-standard feature of pronunciation in words of this class: poor, sure, door, etc. are pronounced to rhyme with Poe, show, dough with a long o instead of an ingliding open o. This is the usage represented as po', do', sho' in the dialect literature. In some manuals of pronunciation it is referred to as "dropping the r" but of course final -r is not pronounced in any word in this dialect. The non-standard feature which is stigmatized is the use of a vowel different from standard English: an up-gliding o instead of an in-gliding one.

10. The merger of pin and pen. As noted above, one of the most general Southern features is the lack of a distinction between short i and e before nasal consonants. Thus pin and pen, tin and ten, since and sense, him and hem, gym and gem, are the same.

11. Monopthongization of diphthongs. A number of homonyms result when the up-glide of the English diphthongs is lost:

long i can merge with short o and broad a, and oi can merge merge with the long open o of all. Thus we can have homonyms:

time = Tom	oil = all
mile = moll	joy = jaw
pride = prod	Roy = raw
fire = far	loin = lawn

It should be noted that these mergers are not common before voiceless consonants: the diphthongs are usually intact before p, t, k, f, s, in pipe, night, knife, lice, choice, etc. Furthermore, we find that speakers with a strong Southern background will often lose the glide of the diphthongs without the mergers shown above. The vowel of time, mile, etc., shifts forward to keep the distinction between time and Tom, mile and moll; for the same speakers, the vowel of hall, jaw, raw, etc. has a back up-glide (similar to that in hole, Joe, row) so that these words are not pronounced the same as oil, joy, Roy even when these have monophthongs.

Extensive perception training is not necessary for these words, since almost all of the speakers have the ability to produce the diphthongs in their careful speech. In fact, the oscillation between diphthongal and monophthongal forms is one of the main features of style shifting in the Southern-influenced community. But the ability to produce the diphthongal form consistently in the stream of speech may require considerable practice.

12. The phonetic forms of the and a. In standard English, there is an automatic alternation between the ordinary forms of the articles and those which precede words beginning with a vowel. The article a becomes an before a vowel and the, usually pronounced with a short vowel sound like that at the end of sofa, is said with a long e to rhyme with he. Thus the apple rhymes with sea-apple. But in the Southern-influenced non-standard dialect, these rules are not followed. A apple is quite regular, and the apple rhymes with a apple. This tendency to allow one short vowel to follow another is the same as that found in the treatment of final -r. Where most r-less dialects preserve the -r between vowels, (and even insert it where it is not found in the spelling), the non-standard dialect considered here allows fo' o'clock. It would seem that all three of these features can be treated at once by the teacher, to bring home to the student the general idea of alternate forms before words beginning with a vowel.

13. Some individual words. There are in this non-standard dialect many individual words which differ in pronunciation from standard English, and these pronunciations may be surprisingly resistant to correction. Some are long-standing representatives of an oral tradition which goes back to Anglo-Saxon times: e.g., aks for ask. Some involve phonetic principles which have operated irregularly but persistently in the history of English, such as the reversal of r and other

consonants ("metathesis") in purpose for prupose, pattren for pattern. Some individual words show assimilation of one consonant to the following one: bidness for business. Initial unstressed vowels are frequently dropped where standard speakers never drop them: 'lectric, 'leven, 'zackly, 'zample. These dialect features form a long but heterogeneous list, and the traditional method of correcting them as they occur may be as effective here as any other one.

14. Combinations of non-standard features. It seldom happens that any one of the non-standard features mentioned above seriously interferes with communication, although they may mark the speaker as a member of a particular class of society. Combinations of these individual rules or features may, however, add up to expressions which are quite unintelligible to speakers of standard English. For example,

She wow!

is a common expression which equals standard She is wild. Four different rules of the non-standard dialect are operating here:

1. The copula is deleted.
2. The consonant cluster -ld is simplified with loss of final d.
3. The final -l which results is vocalized.
4. The diphthong ai is simplified by a loss of the glide.

The resulting form differs from the standard "she wow" by a slight difference in the rounding of the high back glide, and as we frequently find in such cases, this difference is not enough to maintain the distinction between wow and wild. Therefore a standard speaker will find it very difficult to trace the original semantic intention of the non-standard speaker as a result of this intricate combination of phonetic rules.

Footnotes

[1]On the other hand, children who (in the prior example) pronounce passed as pass, but read to rhyme with bed, obviously have the ability to understand the written -ed; their variation from standard English is thus largely in the area of the pronunciation of consonant clusters.

[2]That is to say that since yours, his, hers, ours, theirs all end in -s, the generalization to mines is easily understandable and should be pointed out as an irregularity in standard English that must be learned in particular.

[3]There is another -s inflection of interest in the study of non-standard English: the adverbial -s of besides, sometimes, nowadays and perhaps nights (as in He works nights). There are both grammatical and pronunciative factors involved here, but they have not yet been worked out in detail.

[4]The basic standard rule involves using more with words of more than two syllables, -er with monosyllables, and one or the other with particular dissyllables; but there is some variation, both optional and obligatory, even from this rule. The superlative is formed in a parallel manner.